

Identity Matters

Why sexual orientation doesn't define you

Many Christians believe chastity is the *only* answer for those with same-sex attractions. They believe people are gay or straight and that their identities, in that regard, are fixed. If someone is gay, the only option, according to these Christians, is celibacy. Everything else that comes with gay life, however, is OK.

Sadly, we're so behavior-driven as Christians that we believe as long as we keep our pants zipped and legs crossed, we're doing well. *Sexual sin is not the beginning of a problem; it's the result of one.* While some fall into sexual sin due to a momentary temptation, most stay in sexual sin because it *seems* to satisfy a core, God-given need for intimacy and relationship. But sex was never meant to be a substitute for relational intimacy. Sex is a godly expression that flows out of healthy intimacy within the confines of heterosexual marriage.

Celibacy is the godly option for all single men and women. Yet today, while many Christians with same-sex attractions are choosing celibacy, they're also opting to keep the gay identity/label. This falls short of God's best because identity matters. How we view and refer to ourselves is very important.

Twenty years ago when I began my journey out of the gay lifestyle toward holiness, I could've simply worked on my sexual urges and opted not to deal with the deeper issues that fueled my desire for sex. I could've called myself a celibate gay man and left it at that. But that wouldn't have taken me far.

The extreme changes that have since occurred in my heart, mind and life were fueled by an identity transformation. In those

early days, I chose to focus most on figuring out who I was in Christ, which led to a change in how I behaved. Simply discontinuing or curbing how I expressed my same-sex attractions wasn't enough.

The problem with being a gay Christian is that gay takes center stage. But God won't share His throne with anyone or anything. It's vital to understand who God is and who He created us to be, especially in light of the fallenness of humanity. Search the Word and you'll find He has a plan for you that's born out of the fullness of who He is—and your identity in Him.